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ABSTRACT

Successful boarding home parents seem to have two qualities in common: they express their affection for their student openly and often, and they respect their student's desire to be treated as a mature person. Many cultural differences exist between the Indian and Eskimo students, coming from villages without high schools, and the boarding home families they will live with while obtaining a secondary education. Many puzzling and upsetting situations can be avoided if boarding home parents are sensitive to cultural differences, e.g., attitudes toward time, rules, and food, and to the student's style of communication, which is apt to be subtle, indirect, and nonverbal--especially in expressions of gratitude. A student's lateness for dinner may be interpreted as an act of rudeness unless the boarding home parents realize that in the home village people rarely do things by the clock and that teenagers usually fix their own meals whenever they are hungry. Rules are necessary for the students' well being, but Native adolescents are treated as adults in their home villages and are used to independence. Unnecessary conflict can be avoided by limiting rules to major issues and by explaining the reasons behind the rules. With understanding and acceptance of cultural and individual differences, the boarding home program can benefit both the student and the boarding home family. (JH)

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

A Guide for Boarding Home Parents

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PREFACE

This booklet was prepared for the Division of Regional Schools and Boarding Home Program under a grant to the Center for Northern Educational Research. It is based on a more extensive study by the investigator entitled *Alaska's Urban Boarding Home Program*. Readers desiring additional information on the Boarding Home Program and characteristics of successful boarding home parents may wish to obtain this study. It is available at the Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research at the University of Alaska.

JK
August 1972

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All errors are my responsibility alone.

JK
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GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Introduction

This booklet is intended to help you and your family get the most out of your participation in the Alaska Department of Education's Boarding Home Program. In the booklet, you will find information about how to understand and handle successfully certain kinds of situations which might puzzle or upset you if you aren't prepared for them. By reading this booklet, you can learn from other boarding home parents' experiences, and be ready to enjoy fully your relationship with a boarding home student.

The aim of the Boarding Home Program is to provide a secondary education for Indian and Eskimo students from villages without high schools. Please note that the purpose of the program is *not* to "help" Natives by changing their personalities, beliefs, or ways of life. Serious problems can result if boarding home parents mistakenly view the time with their student as a year-long "civic project" rather than an opportunity simply to get to know and enjoy living with an Eskimo or Indian student while he or she attends high school.

Besides providing a secondary education the Boarding Home Program also provides other kinds of new experiences for the student. For example, such things as how urban families live and how to get along in a city open up new possibilities to rural students. The boarding home family is the main source of these side benefits of the program, especially for those students who have never before been away from their home village; their feelings about white people and about urban life will depend very much on you and on their experience in the boarding home.

While some students have become real members of their boarding home families, others have remained outsiders no matter how long they lived in the home. Still others have left the home and the program entirely. In each individual case, the outcome depends in part on your boarding home student's background, ambitions, and emotional and social maturity. However, the outcome also depends on your attitudes and actions and the kind of relationship that grows up between you and your boarding home student.

There is no one particular type of successful boarding home parents. Some are strict; some are lenient; some have orderly and quiet homes; some have lively, chaotic households. They don't change their way of life for the boarding home student. There are two things, however, which successful boarding home parents seem to have in common. First, they express their affection for their student very openly and often. Second, they show their student that they believe he is a responsible adult. These parents generally receive a lot of enjoyment from having a student live with them during the school year.

Making the Student Welcome

When your boarding home student arrives, he is a stranger who has to find a place for himself in your household. Everyone else in the house has been there for years; each knows the other's faults and virtues and understands the other's quirks. Living together is a habit, and the family has a whole collection of standard jokes, traditions, and daily rituals which it shares. It will take time for your boarding home student to feel that he is part of the family.

WHICH IS BETTER?

Mrs. E. We are working real hard to get ready for Sarah's arrival. We redecorated the back room, and we've bought a beautiful bedroom set. She'll be sure to appreciate all the trouble we've gone to just to make her happy!

Mrs. G. We are really looking forward to Sarah's arrival. The kids and I went to the library and got out a bunch of books on bush Alaska. We hope that she won't be so homesick if we show her we know about her life at home.

Making a newcomer feel at home when you and he come from different cultural groups is easier if you remember that in different cultures the same act may have different meanings. For example, some boarding home parents complained that their student was rude and didn't care enough about them or their convenience to bother coming home in time for dinner. To those parents, being on time for scheduled events was important, and dinner time was an occasion when everyone sat down together to eat and talk over the day's events. The student, on the other hand, was surprised that her boarding home parents were

angry over a few minutes lateness. In her home village, dinner time had always been any time she was hungry, and people didn't do everything by the clock anyway, so being a few minutes late or early was hardly noticeable. She assumed that her boarding home parents must not like her at all in order to get so angry about such a little thing.

Faced with this cross-cultural impasse, the boarding home mother got through it smoothly by realizing that, "Some problems were as much my fault as hers. For example, she had to get used to a culture dependent on time. After a week of waiting dinner and getting mad about it, we went ahead and ate. After she missed dinner a few times and had to make her own, she wasn't late again." In the pages that follow, we shall examine both the boarding home parents' and the students' points of view in discussing some more problems that might occur. As you will see, most potential conflicts between boarding home parents and students become much less troublesome once we know the reasons for each person's actions.

Do You Like Me?

The biggest worry Indian and Eskimo students have is whether their boarding home parents like them. Many boarding home parents also worry a great deal about whether their student likes and respects them. If everyone spends too much time worrying about being liked, however, real friendship has a hard time getting started. Each of you may look at the other's actions like detectives to try to find signs of how the other person is feeling — and run the risk of misinterpreting what you see. It is much better to act naturally and get to know each other gradually. In order for your eventual friendship to be solid and real, you must each accept each other for who you are rather than for who you wish you were, or wish he were.

One thing that would be good to keep in mind is that your Eskimo or Indian boarding home student has just left his home and all that is familiar to him. He probably needs special affection and reassurance while he learns to live apart from his family. Successful boarding home parents have made their student's first few days in their home easier by openly and spontaneously showing warm feelings for their student. One boarding home mother described her first meeting by saying, "When we sat down together that first night, I told him I loved him and I cared about him." When asked how she could tell someone she had just met that she loved him, the boarding home mother laughed, "It's very easy. You just come out and say, 'I love you.' You say it with feeling in your voice. It's a feeling from the heart." Some parents find it difficult to express themselves that way. As one boarding home father explained, "You feel

sort of silly telling a 15-year-old girl that you love her. But you've got to do it because they are that direct with each other. She writes letters to her brother that you'd think were written to her boyfriend. Also, they don't have the history of relationships that you have with your own children. They don't know how you feel about them unless you tell them directly." Someone who hasn't lived with you long enough to learn all the subtle signs through which you show love needs more obvious demonstrations of affection.

Your family may not be used to talking about their feelings for each other but may always express themselves through hugs, smiles, and other wordless ways. Eskimo and Indian students appear to be especially sensitive to these kinds of communication, and will probably be able to read your positive feelings for them loud and clear when they are expressed this way. As one student said of her boarding home mother, "She has a smile that will make anyone feel wanted and happy."

While most successful boarding home parents give a lot of obvious affection, they also do not demand that the student return their affection in obvious ways. Eskimo and Indian adolescents may have mixed feelings about giving and receiving open affection. Embarrassment about affection for parents is a common quality among all teenagers you know, but is probably more intense among Eskimos and Indians. As small babies, they are treated with great warmth and indulgence, but as they grow older, open displays of affection become rarer. While the adolescent may be proud of growing up and reject parental affection as being "babyish," he or she may actually continue to long for it. Therefore, your boarding home student might strongly desire affection from you, but respond to your hug not with a returned embrace but with a tensed-up body.

Also, just when a good relationship has been established, boarding home students may suddenly begin to withdraw from the boarding home parents, because they may fear that their new love for the boarding home parent means they no longer love their own parents. When this occurs, successful boarding home parents accept it as a matter of course or as teenage ups and downs. One boarding home mother said, "He lets me hug him with one arm but not with two. I guess that's reserved for his own Mama." Some students may need to be reassured that the boarding home parents expect him to continue loving his own parents, and that the boarding home parents are not trying to substitute themselves for his real family.

In some cases, boarding home parents have gotten the impression that students did not like them because they misinterpreted the students' behavior. Generally, it has been those boarding home parents who have tried too hard and worried too much about whether or not their

student liked them who have been most likely to think they have failed to form a real friendship. Some parents tried to obtain instant affection through expensive gifts of clothes and trips. When their student took those gifts as a matter of course since "all white people are rich," the parents became disappointed and angry. Other parents cooked elaborate dinners and felt rebuffed when their student forgot to come home for dinner or ate only the meat and bread to which she was accustomed in the village.

On the other hand, some boarding home students have also misinterpreted the parents' behavior. Many students have seen rejection and prejudice in past relationships with whites and some fear similar treatment from boarding home parents. Some students have found it, even when the boarding home parents held no feelings of prejudice. One student, for example, called up her counselor hysterically to tell him that the boarding home parents had locked her out of the house. The counselor found that the parents had expected the girl to return home much later and had planned to be home at that time. Boarding home students have remarked that one of their major problems in the boarding home was misinterpreting how the boarding home parents felt. One girl said, "At first, I thought they were prejudiced, that they had bad feelings toward me. It took me a long while to rule out that they didn't."

Trivial things have sometimes been picked out by students as signs that showed prejudice or rejection on the part of their boarding home parents. Remarks like, "Eat your vegetable, do you want to get scurvey?", "Turn off the lights," "Hang your clothes up in the closet," can be said in such a way that the student feels she's done something you disapprove of or find "primitive." In her home village, eating lots of vegetables, turning off the lights, and hanging clothes in closets may be impractical. In Eskimo and Indian hunting cultures, meat is considered a much better food for people than greens; in the village, leaving lights on may be necessary to maintain the generator; and houses may have no closets to hang clothes in.

Some parents have made their student feel bad by being too kind. One couple wanted to give their boarding home student all the "advantages" and went overboard with tutoring services, special lessons, hair appointments, and a new wardrobe. While the student saw the parents' good intentions, she was depressed because she felt that the parents thought she was inadequate and unlovable unless she were changed all around. If, on the other hand, she had been convinced that they genuinely liked her and accepted her as she was, their generous offers of held would probably have been accepted more in the spirit they were intended

To sum up, the bond of mutual trust and affection that grows between you and your Eskimo or Indian boarding home student can act

as a buffer to prevent little everyday problems and misunderstandings from becoming big ones. Any of the ticklish situations that appear in the pages of this booklet can be worked through if you and your boarding student enjoy and respect each other's individuality.

Don't Treat Me Like a Baby!

A rule to remember when dealing with your boarding home student is: treat him like an adult and expect him to act like an adult. You may not realize that at puberty, Indian and Eskimo adolescents are considered by the people in their villages to have reached adulthood. Being an adult in the village means much the same as it does in the city. Adults have no rules imposed on them by parents. Only children are told when to go to bed, when to come home, and when to eat. Adults stay up all night if they want, come and go as they please, and eat when they are hungry. Thus, when you tell your boarding home student to do things that you would tell an urban adolescent to do, he may think that you are treating him like a small child. In fact, one of the most frequent complaints of boarding home students is that the parents "treat me like a baby."

Unfortunately, it is easy to think of, and then treat, Native students as though they are younger than they are. Some reasons for this are their physical appearance (particularly Eskimos, who are generally short), their grade in school (which is usually lower than their age would call for), and their inexperience with urban living (crossing a street on the green light is something one usually teaches a small child). The student recognizes these facts, too, and may become super-sensitive to real or imagined slights.

WHICH IS BETTER?

Mrs E Now Johnnie dear, I've told you a thousand times that kids your age are supposed to be in bed by ten o'clock. Put on your p.j.'s and remember to brush your teeth.

Mrs G I'm tired after such a long day. I'm going to get a little extra sleep tonight [Message: How about you?]

It is almost impossible to prevent your student from feeling some loss of his adult status in coming from the village to the city. What you can do is not make it any worse. One way is to avoid rules that are unnecessary. As one parent put it, "After all, you're not going to tell a man who is 18 that it's time to go to bed."

Of course, you cannot avoid all rules. After all, there are dangers in the city that are not present in the village, and guidelines for behavior are necessary to protect your student. It is important to explain these rules as things that are expected of adults so the student can accept them more easily. Successful boarding home parents often told the student in so many words that, although there were rules, they considered him an adult. As one boarding home parent put it:

> The most important thing is that instead of treating them like a child, you treat them like an adult. It's a very thin line. Okay, we have rules and regulations. You know what we expect of you, and we trust you to set a good example so we can be proud of you.

Another successful boarding home mother conquered the problem of her girl students hanging around bars, for example, not by ordering them to stay away, but by reminding them every once in a while "how young ladies behave."

Who's the Boss Here?

Students are frequently surprised and upset at the amount of control boarding home parents routinely expect to have over them. As mentioned before, Eskimo and Indian teenagers tend to be seen as adults at home, and only little children are ordered about. However, the question of controlling their behavior goes further than that because whites usually have different ideas from Indians and Eskimos about whether a person should interfere with another person's behavior. In most western society relationships, one person tells the other what to do. Bosses order employees around; parents dictate rules to children; friends make suggestions to each other, and so on. In contrast, Indians and Eskimos tend to feel that it is not right for one person to tell another person what to do *even if it is for the person's own good*. Therefore, when you as a boarding home parent try to lay down and enforce what seems to you to be a few self-evident rules—when to come home, what time to eat, who to visit—your student may view them as ruthless power plays.

There are many things you can do to prevent the issue of who is boss from getting out of hand. One idea is to limit the number of rules you make by not making rules on minor issues. As one parent said, "Why make a fuss because he won't eat vegetables? Just give him a vitamin pill." Another very important thing you can do is to phrase your rules in ways that are not bossy, that make the student feel he is an adult making an intelligent decision on the issue. As one parent put it, "Don't order. Ask. Don't demand. Suggest." Or as one satisfied girl expressed it, her parent acted as "my advisor, not my boss."

One way you can make the student feel that she is an adult making decisions rather than a child being ordered about is to explain the reasons for your rules. Many boarding home parents were surprised to find out that students resented their rules mostly because they really did not understand why they were necessary. Why, for example, should they not wander around town at night? In the village, they did so and came to no harm. The successful boarding home parents learned to explain these rules. One parent, for example, explained the rule about wandering at night in terms of the difference in the dangers found in the city and the village, "I told her that in the village you've got to be afraid of wild animals, but here it's wild people." Many parents were surprised to find that they themselves often didn't know the reasons for their own rules and wondered about them themselves. As one parent said, "You know, she asked me why I go to bed early at night so I can go to the office on time in the morning when there may be nothing special to do in the office and something very interesting to do at night. I started to wonder about that myself." It might help if you asked your student to participate in thinking through and setting up guidelines for behavior.

Another method you can use to demonstrate the point of your rules is to "let" natural consequences occur that convince the student of the need for the rule. One boarding home mother for example, got her student to stop gorging herself before dinner by letting her eat all she wanted and then taking the whole family out to a drive-in for hamburgers and malts. When the student found she could eat only a few bites, the lesson was learned.

You can also let your student know when she makes errors without embarrassing her. For example, you can avoid a direct accusation by giving her the silent treatment or by joking (methods village parents often use). In one case, a boarding home mother suspected that her student was spending time in bars. Rather than directly accusing her, the boarding home mother joked about recent police raids where girls who had been in bars only once were picked up. The student got the point

Your student's natural parents can also be a big help to you. Try discussing behavior or other problems with them during visits or in letters. Boarding home parents are often amazed at how problems in the home disappear when students realize that their own parents agree with the boarding home parents. Don't be discouraged if the student's parents do not write to you or don't visit you when they are in town. Unfortunately, some parents are embarrassed at their poor English or are afraid to call on that "pretty rich lady." Even when this happens you can still rely on natural parents' support to enforce your rules by pointing out that the student's parents would want it this way. As one mother said, "Your

Compare the following examples for the amount and kind of control over behavior.

In Western Society:

At a casual party, John mentioned that he planned to buy a new Ford. Fred said he thought John ought to get a Chevy. Lucy said she had just bought a Herb Alpert album and Barbara suggested that she should have bought a new Jackie Gleason recording instead. Sam said he was thinking of looking for a new job, but Ed cautioned him to stick with a sure thing.[1]

In an Athabascan Indian Community:

Four-year-old Benny Heiro seemed to spend his days bombarding our cabin with rocks and sticks, despite our frowns. Cora replied, "Yes, Benny was like that at her house too." He had spent that morning pounding on the wall with an axe and culminating his labours by striking Cora's four-year-old daughter on the head with the blunt end. (The anthropologist) exclaimed in shocked tones, "Good heavens, what did you do?" Cora replied, "Well, I told him to go home, but he wouldn't."[2]

In an Eskimo Community:

If a young hunter walks out onto the ice in summer without pushing a sled along, those who know better will probably let him shoot a seal and learn for himself how difficult it is to drag the seal home on the ice without a sled. Only in a dangerous situation will comments or hints be made, and even then they are often cryptic and indirect. Minding one's business reaches extremes on occasions. I once saw two puppies pull an excellent caribou skin down from a cache and rip it to shreds, in full view of several Eskimos. It is better not to interfere in another man's affairs at all than to risk offending him, even in situations like this.[3]

[1]Adapted from Wax, R.H. and R.K. Thomas. "American Indians and White People." *Phylon*, 1961, 22(4), 305-317.

[2]Helm, J. *The Lynx Point People: The Dynamics of a Northern Athabascan Band*. Natl. Museum of Canada, Bulletin No. 176, 1961 p 87

[3]Nelson, R K *Hunters of the Northern Ice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969. p. 380.

parents loved you enough to send you here away from them to get an education. Now sit down," she said (mocking a drill sergeant), "and study."

The problem of "who's the boss" will become much less serious once you and your student develop a relationship of warmth and trust. When parents have given the students lots of affection, their students have not wanted to risk the loss of that affection by doing things that hurt them. As one mother who had developed such a good relationship said when asked why her students had no trouble with rules, "They do it to please you." If the enforcement of rules becomes a major issue, and fights, tears, and stony silence become frequent, it may very well be a sign that your relationship with your boarding home student is not up to par in other areas.

Let's Have a Heart-To-Heart Talk

In order to start off on the right foot, try to avoid the temptation of sitting down with your boarding home student the moment he walks in the front door and bombarding him with questions. Westerners may be used to making "small talk" in strange situations but Eskimos and Indians usually react to unfamiliar people and places by falling silent. The silence is a period of quiet observation, during which your student will be mulling over first impressions and figuring out what is expected of him. Trying to get him to talk when he doesn't want to will make both of you unnecessarily uncomfortable. After your student gets used to you and your family, he will usually chat and laugh with you with ease.

If you are aware of a few things about the special ways in which Eskimos and Indians communicate, your time with your student may be easier. Remember that these differences may not be true of your boarding home student, especially if your student is familiar with city life. If your student comes from a more traditional village, however, it will help communication if you understand what he's used to.

First, your Eskimo or Indian student may think that personal conversation between relative strangers is a very serious invasion of privacy. People from western culture, in contrast, usually think that asking personal questions shows you are genuinely interested in the other person. Thus, your friendly question about the student's private life or problems may be interpreted as very rude and the student may feel you are a real busybody. In the village, when students talk about personal problems, they usually talk to their friends or brothers and sisters, rather than to their parents. In fact, many village parents find out how the student likes

the boarding home — a personal question — not by asking him but by asking his brothers, sisters, and friends.

WHICH IS BETTER?

Mrs. E: Well, Bobby, come right in. We're all waiting to meet you. This is Mr E., Sue, Joe, and this is my neighbor, Mrs. P., and her daughter, Judy. Why don't you start by telling us about yourself? What do your parents do? Are you happy to be here in Anchorage?

Mrs. G: I'm glad you're here. We've been looking forward to your coming. Let me show you your room. You have time now to unpack and make yourself at home. Here's where we keep the coke and cookies in case you want a snack between now and dinner.

Second, Indians and Eskimos often see a direct question as tactless. It is better to find out what they want to know indirectly, especially if it avoids embarrassing someone. You might find this approach needlessly inefficient — why not just ask the student to his face why he is mad? You may feel that the straightforwardness shown by direct questions is a sign of honesty and sincerity. Indians and Eskimos, in contrast, tend to view direct questions as boorish and childish, betraying a sad lack of sophistication. They think that the best way to find out the answer to a question is to wait until someone else or even the course of future events answers it. They often prefer to take hints from carefully observing such wordless clues as posture and facial expressions. If they need a quick verbal answer, Eskimos or Indians may talk around the subject, and give the other person a way to refuse to answer without either party losing face.

WHICH IS BETTER?

One way

You Are you having trouble in English class?
He I don't know (His answer is: I won't admit it.)

Another way

You Some people say the English course is very hard. (The question is Are you having trouble?)
He Many students are afraid of failing. (His answer is: I think so.)

Suppose, for example, your boarding home student comes home from school with a long face. How can you find out what's bothering her,

and what can you do about it? Asking her directly what is wrong may not give you much of an answer Try an indirect approach and just ask how the day went. Somewhere in the middle of your student's story of the day's events, some hint of what is wrong will most likely appear. Maybe you will notice by the student's tone of voice, for example. In this case, let's presume the girl is upset because kids called her names at school. What can you do about it? Again, it is probably best to try an indirect approach. Show that you understand and hope she feels better by talking in general terms about how prejudice hurts people without embarrassing her by talking over her problem in so many words.

Sometimes the most trivial, well-meant questions will backfire and make your student feel inadequate. Questions like "Do you know how to work the shower?" "Have you been to Anchorage?" "Do you know how to iron?" may put him in an embarrassing spot because he must admit that he does not, has not, or cannot do something he thinks he should. Most of these questions can be easily answered by watching carefully to see if the student is puzzled and then showing him how to do something without making a big deal about it. Similarly, some students find it very embarrassing to have to ask questions about things they feel other kids learned long ago. It is easier to understand when the student handles things in your home in the wrong way that he probably was too embarrassed to ask.

For the same reason, students often find it very embarrassing to have their boarding home parents quiz them about life at home. As one student put it:

> I didn t know how to answer them really. I couldn't really answer their questions because I thought that if I told them certain things like we lived in a little run down shack compared to what they're living in, it made me feel much lower.

Many students, of course, do not feel this way, but, if your response to this question is a mumbled evasion, drop the subject until later on in the relationship when your student realizes that you do not disapprove of him and his parents because they are poor or live in the village way.

English may not be your student's natural language and other problems may crop up in talking with him. For one thing, students sometimes use English in different ways such as making a statement to ask a question For example, "I am going to town" (with a rise in the voice at the end which you may not catch) means "Unless you object, I am going to town " It is really a question. Similarly, students may say "Take me to town" when they are really asking "Will you take me to town?"

When a good relationship develops between students and boarding home parents, students often talk a great deal and confide in their

parents. What can ruin the relationship at this time is to have the boarding home parent betray the student's trust by talking about the student or telling his confidences to a third party. Gossip is an important way to keep people in line in the village and students are usually exceptionally sensitive to being talked about and laughed at, even when it is well meant. It is hard for some boarding home parents to resist telling friends about their students' cute reactions to the urban environment. One boarding home student in giving advice to future students, however, suggested:

> Never really let out your problems to your boarding home parents until you know that you can trust them as friends because what you say may sometimes be very amusing as I know from experience they have ways of passing information around.

While these kinds of problems sometimes cause difficulties in communication between parents and students, a total "failure to communicate" may not be the problem at all but only a symptom of a deeper problem. Withdrawal into silence by Native students is a typical reaction to a bad situation. A student who is angry may also choose silence as his weapon of revenge because it upsets the boarding home parent. If silence persists past the time when the student should have gotten to know you and your family, it may be a sign that your student does not feel comfortable and accepted in his new home.

What's to Eat?

Getting used to the eating habits of your boarding home student may be a little hard at first. For one thing, boarding home students are teenagers, and everyone knows that teenage appetites are unbelievable. For another thing, village students often eat in ways that are different from urban students

First, in the village, students usually eat on their own schedule, which usually means snacking all day long when they are hungry rather than sitting down to three meals. Also, in the hunting cultures from which they come, meat is highly valued, and vegetables and salads are considered distinctly second rate. As a result, village students eat mostly meat and treat themselves to large quantities of soda, juice, and other sweets. Also, many villages do not have ways to refrigerate foods, so people are used to eating large quantities of perishable food, like meat or eggs, at once

When your boarding home student makes herself at home in your kitchen, she will probably try to eat the way she does at home. In your eyes, she may seem greedy and selfish with food. In her eyes, her behavior is not inconsiderate since where she comes from everyone does the same thing. Thus, students may eat at one sitting a bag of cookies or a six pack of soda pop that you bought to feed the whole family. Or the student may fry herself a dozen eggs for breakfast. When this happens, explain to your student how you plan and budget your food, and, if necessary, what a budget is. Also, this may be a good time to explain how much it costs to transport a teenager. Remember, when you complain that your boarding home student doesn't seem to understand that "meat costs money" you may be exactly right. Where she comes from, much of the meat is free for the hunting.

It is important for boarding home parents to realize that food is of great importance in Indian and Eskimo psychology. Coming from hunting cultures where starvation did occur, students have learned to be anxious about food. Locking cabinets and refrigerators to limit the student's eating may cause the student much distress. Also, Indians and Eskimos, like certain other cultural groups, often give affection in the form of food. Village parents may also give children food to console them in a time of stress. Thus, food and love may go together in the student's mind. Boarding home parents who try to stop students from eating are often seen as giving them little affection. One of the most frequent complaints of students is that they were "all the time starving" in the boarding home. It was the parents who provided a lot of food for the students who were best liked and who were seen as giving a lot of love, too.

Parent: Where are you going?
Student: Out.
Parent: What will you do?
Student: Nothing.

Boarding home parents frequently worry that their student disappears for hours at a time, hanging around the downtown area. The parents often fear that the student's absence means he dislikes them and is therefore unwilling to be a part of the family.

Students often try to spend large amounts of time away from home not because the students dislike their boarding home, but for many other reasons. First, villagers and westerners may have very different notions about how to spend leisure time. Westerners often fill their home with enjoyable objects — records, T.V., books, hobbies — and expect to spend

their time at home. On the other hand, one Eskimo boarding home mother pointed out, "Life in the village is not home based. You always go out for recreation, visiting people, and walking around. There is nothing fun to do in the home." Village students are used to going out and going visiting when they have fun.

Moreover, in the village, going around town is not as dangerous as it may be in the city. Everyone knows everyone else in a small village, so there is no need to worry about strangers or about even a small child getting lost. Knowing that the child is with familiar people in a familiar area, village parents do not feel the need to keep any closer watch over children's movements then you would keep over your young child while he is playing in the house. Similarly, village parents see no practical reason why anyone must come home for every meal when they can easily eat at a relative's or help themselves when they are hungry. To a student from a small village, your city is an exciting place, and he may literally wait for the adventures he's seen in the movies.

Your student's desire to spend time away from your home may also stem from her homesickness for her family and familiar places. Loneliness may make the student try to "go home" by spending all his time with other students or at the homes of Native families or at the Native hospital or in bars where people from home might appear.

Finally, your student may want to spend time away from your home because he will undoubtedly feel awkward, especially at first. Indian and Eskimo students who have never before left their villages are frequently afraid of and awed by strange whites. The students may be terrified of making a mistake, breaking something, or hurting someone. As one student put it:

> I didn't want to become involved in family activities because I felt out of place in being in a home where all the people were white, and I was Native. I didn't know how to act so I just didn't want to get involved. So what I did most of the time I'd want to get away from the home and get outside and pass time that way so I wouldn't be burdened with how I should do things while I'm staying in the home.

Some households are more formal than others, but you would be surprised how hard it is for an outsider to learn the simplest little rituals of everyday life in your family. To your Eskimo or Indian student, for example, meals at regular times with places set and everyone seated at a table may seem an incredible formality.

Your student may be surprised and insulted by your questions about where she is going, who she will be with, and what she will be doing. She may not see that the questions show your interest and concern in her welfare, but may see them as evidence that you do not trust her. Boarding home students often complain that parents "think Natives are all alike and I'm just going to get into trouble." Moreover, Eskimos and Indians are not accustomed to telling people where they are at every moment because there is no need for such behavior in the village.

The fact is that the city is *not* as safe as the village, and hanging around bars downtown can mean trouble. Also, if you do not know where your student is, you cannot reach her in an emergency. Explain these things to your student. Try to make your home as pleasant as possible for the student and encourage her to spend time with her friends in their homes or yours to make her less homesick. But don't worry if your student prefers to spend lots of time outside the home. One boarding home mother looked at the problem this way: "Give them the responsibility. They don't want to embarrass you anyway. Prove that you really love them by trusting them."

Can I Help You With the Dishes?

As a member of your family, your student will be expected to help with certain chores around the house. An equal division of labor between the student and the rest of the people in the house is only fair, and will make you all feel more like a family. Assigning chores and making sure they are done is another area where the *way* things are done is important.

You need to use judgment as to when to assign certain kinds of jobs. At first, when the boarding home student is still new to your family and terribly afraid of doing something wrong, don't assign jobs that may worry him. For example, some students are afraid to baby-sit for fear something will happen to the little child. (Small children die in the village much more frequently than they do in the city.) It is also wise to remember that chores which are appropriate for girls may not be as appropriate for boys. Sex roles are much more clearly defined in the village than in urban society. Such jobs as washing dishes, sweeping floors and tending babies are considered women's work. A male boarding home student, who is already feeling the effects of being a little frog in a big new pond may bitterly resent being forced to do women's work. He may show his feelings by "forgetting" to do the job, and thereby anger the boarding home parents. As one parent who asked her male student to do the dishes complained, "After all I do for him, all I ask is that he just dry

the dishes at night, and he won't even do that much for me." If your student continually "forgets" to do something you have asked for, that may be a sign you need to discuss the problem or even may need to change what you ask for. In a house where doing dishes is a chore that really needs doing, perhaps the best thing is to let the husband explain the fact that in modern urban society men's and women's work are not so different.

Thanks a Lot!

Your first impulse upon seeing how few belongings your student arrives with may be to buy lots of clothes and other knickknacks. When the first flush of real friendship comes into your relationship, you may also want to shower your new friend with gifts of all sorts. Before you give in to your impulse, think how beholden you would feel if someone far richer than you began buying you expensive presents. A few birthday or Christmas gifts are a good idea, but too many unwarranted presents may make your student acutely uncomfortable.

Eskimos and Indians give things to each other with the expectation that when they are in need, the assistance will be returned. There is no provision for the kind of gift-giving common in western culture — where the giver gets his reward from the feeling of being generous and expects a "thank you" in return. In fact, one man who tried to thank some Eskimos in their village for freely sharing their meat with him was told "It is your right. There is nobody who gives gifts or gets gifts for thereby you become dependent. With gifts you make slaves just as with whips you make dogs."[1]

Many parents become angry and upset when they are generous to the student and he does not say "thank you." Part of the reason may be that a "thank you" does not come naturally to an Indian or Eskimo student who did not use it a lot in his home village. However, your students may also refuse to thank you even if he likes the gift if he feels that accepting the gift *as a gift* will make him indebted to you. He may even feel angry at you for forcing him into a position of indebtedness. One way that some boarding home students have acted when they felt this way was to pretend the gift was only just what they deserved. Families who press their students for a thank you *in words* are likely to be

[1]Freuchen, P. *Book of the Eskimos*. New York. Fawcett World Library, 1961. p. 109

disappointed. They may find that the student even accuses them of making plenty of money off them from the program. He may say that since he is a money maker to the family, he owes no one any thanks.

If you can be content with subtle and indirect expressions of gratitude, you will be likely to find them in such things as your student's pleasant attitude or unsolicited help around the house. Many students show their appreciation by doing the dishes when they haven't been asked or cleaning up the living room when they see it needs it. In fact, that kind of indirect sign is perhaps the best gauge of your success with your boarding home relationship, since it shows that your student enjoys living with you and considers himself a partner in a mutual friendship.

A Parting Thought

We hope that this booklet has given you some idea of what to expect and some helpful suggestions for handling situations which may arise while sharing your home with an Indian or Eskimo boarding home student. To sum up:

Be yourself and don't feel you should revamp your life to suit your student.

Express your affection for your student openly, warmly, and often.

Respect your student's desire to be treated as a mature person.

These general guidelines should provide a basis for making your student's boarding home experience a successful one.

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FOR FURTHER READING

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